



Fun activities to fill up your weekend itinerary!



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LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK

PROFESSIONAL COMPLIMENTARY
PICTURES ON TUESDAY AND FRIDAY



SUNDAY:

MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30 - 8:30pm

MONDAY:

ANGELA FLORES
VIOLINIST
6:30 - 8:30pm

TUESDAY:

JEAN PAUL
SAXOPHONIST
6:30 - 8:30pm

WEDNESDAY:

EDDIE KROON
SINGER 4:00 - 6:00pm
MAILLEYN ALVARADO
VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm

THURSDAY:

MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30 - 8:30pm

FRIDAY:

RICKY THOMAS
GUITARIST
7:00 - 9:00pm

SATURDAY:

EDDIE KROON
SINGER
4:00 - 6:00pm

WATER'S EDGE
RESTAURANT & BAR



KARAOKE 9:00 - 11:00pm

Happy Hour
12 - 1 / 4 - 6 / 9 - 10

PREMIUM
BRANDS

ANGELA FLORES
VIOLINIST
6:30 - 8:30pm

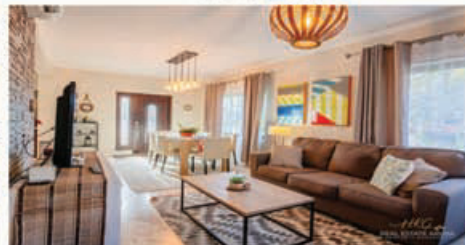
Tel +297 583 8000 Ext. 8106 | Reservations at wateredge-aruba.com | Elegant dining, spectacular ocean views enjoyed al fresco or in air conditioned comfort | Located at Costa Linda Beach Resort

Featured properties

Jardines del Mar - Eagle Beach \$ 595,000
2 bed 2.5 bath

Blue 536 - Eagle Beach \$785,500
2 bed 2 bath

Diamante 6 - Gold Coast \$655,000
3 bed 3 bath



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Get in touch...

About 3 in 10 are highly confident in Trump on Cabinet, spending or military oversight: AP-NORC poll

By LINLEY SANDERS and
MEG KINNARD
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans may have recently elected Donald Trump to a second term, but that doesn't mean they have high confidence in his ability to choose well-qualified people for his Cabinet — or effectively manage government spending, the military and the White House, according to a new poll from the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. As Trump names his appointees for key posts in his administration — some of whom could face difficult confirmation fights in the Senate even with Republicans in control — about half of U.S. adults are "not at all confident" in Trump's ability to appoint well-qualified people for his Cabinet and other high-level government positions.

The appointment process and its breakneck speed have represented a manifestation of Trump's pledge to voters to be a disruptive force in the country and a return to the chaotic era of governance that defined his first four years in the Oval Office. But only around 3 in 10 Americans are "extremely" or "very" confident that Trump will pick qualified people to serve in his administration. A majority



Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump smiles at an election night watch party early Nov. 6, 2024, in West Palm Beach, Fla.

Associated Press

of Republicans say they do have high confidence. Trump has promised to shake up Washington with an aggressive approach that includes the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, a non-governmental task force assigned to find ways to fire federal workers, cut programs and slash federal regulations, to be helmed by billionaire Elon Musk and fellow entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy. Beyond his appointments, though, the survey finds a similar level

of confidence in Trump's ability to manage government spending and perform other key presidential tasks, including overseeing the military and the White House — which, in Trump's first term, experienced significant high-level staff turnover, particularly in its early days. That's not quite the same challenge faced four years ago by President Joe Biden, who came into office with higher levels of confidence in some areas than others. Democrats and independents are most likely

to doubt Trump's leadership. That low confidence is generally driven by Democrats and independents. A large share of Democrats are suspicious of Trump's abilities on all of these fronts — about three-quarters say they are "not at all confident" that he will be able to effectively manage the White House, government spending or the military, or choose well-qualified people for his Cabinet. About 4 in 10 independents, meanwhile, say they are "slightly" or "not at all" con-

fident in Trump's capacity to execute each of these responsibilities, while about 2 in 10 are "extremely" or "very" confident.

Republican confidence is higher, but it isn't overwhelming.

Confidence among Republicans is higher, but not as overwhelming as Democrats' doubts. About 6 in 10 Republicans are "extremely" or "very" confident in Trump's ability to choose well-qualified people to serve in his Cabinet and manage the White House, the military and government spending. About 2 in 10 Republicans are "moderately confident," and another 2 in 10 are "slightly" or "not at all" confident in each case.

Biden had similar hurdles at the start of his term.

When Biden took office in 2021, people also harbored some doubts about how he'd carry out some major responsibilities — but unlike with Trump, where concern is fairly even across different tasks, they were more confident in Biden's ability to do some things than others. When he entered the White House, Biden had served eight years as President Barack Obama's vice president, as well as decades in the U.S. Senate, and he ran the 2020 campaign largely on those years of experience. □



The American and Chinese flags wave at Genting Snow Park ahead of the 2022 Winter Olympics, in Zhangjiakou, China, Feb. 2, 2022.

Associated Press

By DIDI TANG
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. has updated a de-

cadecades-old science and technology agreement with China to reflect their growing rivalry for techno-

U.S. updates a science and technology pact with China to reflect growing rivalry and security threats

logical dominance. The new agreement, signed Friday in Beijing after many months of negotiations, has a narrower scope and additional safeguards to minimize the risk to national security.

The State Department said the agreement sustains intellectual property protections, establishes new guardrails to protect the safety and security of researchers and "advances U.S. interests through newly established and strength-

ened provisions on transparency and data reciprocity."

It covers only basic research and does not facilitate the development of critical and emerging technologies, the department said. This includes technologies related to artificial intelligence and quantum computing, which are considered crucial for economic strength and military supremacy.

China's science and technology ministry also an-

nounced the signing, but provided no details or assessment in its one-line statement. The Chinese foreign ministry said earlier this year that such cooperation is mutually beneficial.

The first such agreement was signed in January 1979 when the two countries established diplomatic ties to counter the influence of the Soviet Union and when China severely lagged behind the U.S. and other Western nations in science and technology. □

U.S. military flies American released from Syrian prison to Jordan, officials say

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and AAMER MADHANI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military has transported out of Syria an American who had disappeared seven months ago into former President Bashar Assad's notorious prison system and was among the thousands released this week by rebels, U.S. officials said Friday. Travis Timmerman, 29, was flown to Jordan on a U.S. military helicopter, according to two U.S. officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing operation.

It's unclear where Timmerman may go next. He thanked his rescuers for freeing him but has told American officials that he would like to stay in the region, according to another person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to comment publicly. Timmerman was detained after he crossed into Syria while on a Christian pilgrimage from a mountain along the eastern Lebanese town of Zahle in June.

He told The Associated Press in an interview earlier Friday that he was not ill-treated while in Palestine



Missing Adult

Pete Timmerman

Date of Last Contact: 6/2/2024

Age at Disappearance: 29

Date of Birth: 2/12/1995

Race: Unknown

Gender: Male

Hair: Brown

Eyes: Brown

Height: 5'9

Weight: 140

Missing From: Budapest, Hungary

This image from the Missouri State Highway Patrol bulletin that shows Pete Travis Timmerman, who went by Travis, had been missing since June and turned up in Syria on Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024, who said he had been detained after crossing into Syria on foot seven months ago while on a Christian pilgrimage.

Branch, a notorious detention facility operated by Syrian intelligence.

In his prison cell, Timmerman said, he had a mattress, a plastic drinking container and two others for waste. He said the Friday calls to prayers helped keep track of days.

Timmerman said he was released Monday morning alongside a young Syrian

man and 70 female prisoners, some of whom had their children with them, after rebels seized control of Damascus and forced Assad from power in a dramatic upheaval.

He said he was freed by "the liberators who came into the prison and knocked the door down (of his cell) with a hammer." He had been held separately from

Syrian and other Arab prisoners and said he didn't know of any other Americans held in the facility.

Timmerman is from Urbana, Missouri, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Springfield in the southwestern part of the state. He earned a finance degree from Missouri State University in 2017.

His mother, Stacey Gardin-

er, said she was told that he was being taken to a military base in Jordan. The family still had not spoken to him.

Mouaz Moustafa, a U.S.-based Syrian opposition activist who worked with rebels to arrange Timmerman's transfer back to safety, tweeted a photo of the freed American standing next to a man in U.S. military uniform in the flat desert of the region.

"Safe and sound and back in American hands," Moustafa wrote.

U.S. officials, meanwhile, are continuing their search for Austin Tice, an American journalist who disappeared 12 years ago near Damascus.

Nizar Zakka, president of the U.S.-based Hostage Aid Worldwide that was commissioned by Tice's family to search for him, said he called Tice's mother and sister after receiving a tip Thursday from a Syrian near where Timmerman was found.

The caller thought the foreigner was Tice.

"We asked them for videos, we ask them for voice (recordings) to make sure," Zakka said. □

Associated Press

Nancy Pelosi hospitalized after she 'sustained an injury' from fall on official trip to Luxembourg

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and FARNOUSH AMIRI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former House Speaker Nancy

Pelosi has been hospitalized after she "sustained an injury" during an official engagement in Luxembourg, according to a spokesman.



Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., speaks during an event in Washington, June 23, 2023.

Associated Press

Pelosi, 84, was in Europe with a bipartisan congressional delegation to mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. Her spokesman, Ian Krager, said in a statement that she is "currently receiving excellent treatment from doctors and medical professionals" and is unable to attend the remainder of events on her trip.

He did not describe the nature of her injury or give any additional details, but a person familiar with the incident said that Pelosi tripped and fell while at an event with the other members of Congress. The person requested anonymity to discuss the fall because

they were not authorized to speak about it publicly. Krager said that Pelosi "looks forward to returning home to the U.S. soon."

Among the members on the trip was Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, who posted on social media that he was "praying for a speedy recovery," for Pelosi. The two lawmakers were captured holding hands in a group photo Friday at the U.S. Embassy in Luxembourg.

"I'm disappointed Speaker Emerita Pelosi won't be able to join the rest of our delegation's events this weekend as I know how much she looked forward to honoring our veterans,"

McCaul wrote on X. "But she is strong, and I am confident she will be back on her feet in no time."

The former leader's fall comes two years after her husband Paul was attacked by a man with a hammer at their San Francisco home. The man, who was sentenced in October to 30 years in federal prison, broke into their home looking for Pelosi.

Pelosi, who was first elected in 1987 and served as speaker twice, stepped down from her leadership post two years ago but remained in Congress and was re-elected to represent her San Francisco district in November. □

Texas' abortion pill lawsuit against New York doctor marks new challenge to interstate telemedicine

By SEAN MURPHY, MICHAEL HILL and GEOFF MULVIHILL
Associated Press

Texas has sued a New York doctor for prescribing abortion pills to a woman near Dallas, launching one of the first challenges in the U.S. to shield laws that Democrat-controlled states passed to protect physicians after *Roe v. Wade* was overturned.

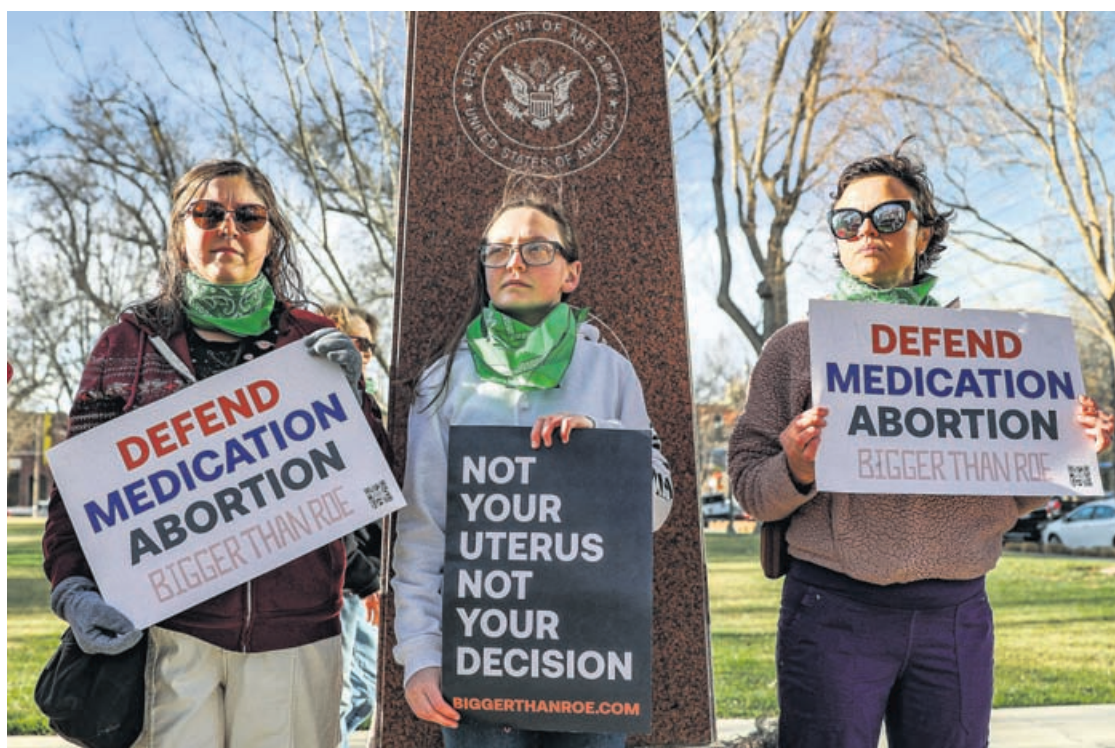
Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton filed the lawsuit on Thursday in Collin County, and it was announced Friday.

Such prescriptions, made online and over the phone, are a key reason that the number of abortions has increased across the U.S. even since state bans started taking effect. Most abortions in the U.S. involve pills rather than procedures.

Mary Ruth Ziegler, a law professor at the University of California, Davis, School of Law, said a challenge to shield laws, which blue states started adopting in 2023, has been anticipated.

And it could have a chilling effect on prescriptions.

"Will doctors be more afraid to mail pills into Texas, even if they might be protected by shield laws because they don't know if they're protected by shield



Three members of the Women's March group protest in support of access to abortion medication outside the Federal Courthouse on Wednesday, March 15, 2023 in Amarillo, Texas.

Associated Press

laws?" she said in an interview Friday.

The lawsuit accuses New York Dr. Margaret Daley Carpenter of violating Texas law by providing the drugs to a Texas patient and seeks up to \$250,000. No criminal charges are involved.

Texas bars abortion at all stages of pregnancy and has been one of the most aggressive states at pushing back against abortion rights. It began enforcing a state law in 2021 even

before the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and opened the door to state bans that barred nearly all abortions by allowing citizens to sue anyone who provides an abortion or assists someone in obtaining one.

Paxton said that the 20-year-old woman who received the pills mifepristone and misoprostol, which are typically used in medication abortions ended up in a hospital with complications. It was only

after that, the state said in its filing, that the man described as "the biological father of the unborn child" learned of the pregnancy and the abortion.

"In Texas, we treasure the health and lives of mothers and babies, and this is why out-of-state doctors may not illegally and dangerously prescribe abortion-inducing drugs to Texas residents," Paxton said in a statement.

A phone message left for Carpenter was not imme-

diately returned, nor was an email to the Abortion Coalition for Telemedicine, where she's co-medical director and founder.

Anti-abortion advocates, who legally challenged the Biden administration's prescribing rules around mifepristone, have been readying provocative and unusual ways to further limit abortion pill access when Trump takes office next year. They feel emboldened to challenge the pills' use and seek ways to restrict it under a conservative U.S. Supreme Court buttressed by a Republican-controlled Congress and White House. Earlier this year, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a group of anti-abortion doctors and their organizations lacked the legal standing to sue to try to have the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval of mifepristone rescinded. But since then, the Republican state attorneys general from Idaho, Kansas and Missouri have sought to have some of the rules around the pills tightened including to bar telemedicine prescriptions. Also this year, Louisiana became the first state to reclassify the drugs as "controlled dangerous substances." □

Supreme Court will hear Catholic charitable group's plea to be free from Wisconsin unemployment tax

By MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Friday



The Supreme Court is seen in Washington, Nov. 2, 2024.

Associated Press

said it would take up a new religious rights case over whether a Catholic charitable organization must pay Wisconsin's employment tax.

The justices will review a divided state Supreme Court ruling that refused to grant an exemption to the Catholic Charities Bureau, based in Superior, Wisconsin. The state court ruled that the work of Catholic Charities and four related organizations is primarily not religious, although it found that the motivation to help older, disabled and low-income people stems

from Catholic teachings. The case probably will be argued in the spring. The Supreme Court in recent years has issued an unbroken string of decisions siding with churches and religious plaintiffs in disputes with states.

Lawyers for the Wisconsin groups argued to the court that the decision violates religious freedoms protected by the First Amendment. They also said the court should step in to resolve conflicting rulings by several top state courts on the same issue.

"Wisconsin is trying to make

sure no good deed goes unpunished.

Penalizing Catholic Charities for serving Catholics and non-Catholics alike is ridiculous and wrong," Eric Rassbach, the lead lawyer for Catholic Charities at the Supreme Court, said in a statement.

Wisconsin Attorney General Joshua Kaul had urged the high court to stay out of the case, arguing that much of the groups' funding comes from state and local governments, and the joint federal and state Medicaid program. □

A suspected Chinese spy with business ties to Prince Andrew is barred from U.K.

By **DANICA KIRKA**
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A suspected Chinese spy with business ties to Prince Andrew has been barred from the U.K. because of concerns he poses a threat to national security.

A British immigration tribunal upheld the decision on Thursday in a ruling that revealed the Chinese national had developed such a close relationship with Andrew that he was invited to the prince's birthday party. Government officials were concerned the man could have misused his influence because the prince was under "considerable pressure" at the time, according to the ruling.

British authorities believe the Chinese national, whose name wasn't released, was working on behalf of the United Front Work Department, an arm of the Chinese Communist Party that is used to influence foreign entities.

The government determined that the businessman "was in a position to generate relationships be-



Prince Andrew leaves after attending the Christmas day service at St Mary Magdalene Church in Sandringham in Norfolk, England, Sunday, Dec. 25, 2022.

Associated Press

tween senior Chinese officials and prominent U.K. figures which could be leveraged for political interference purposes by the Chinese State," according to the tribunal's decision.

In a statement from his office, Andrew, also known as the Duke of York, said he accepted government advice and ceased all con-

tact with the Chinese national as soon as concerns were raised.

"The Duke met the individual through official channels with nothing of a sensitive nature ever discussed," his office said. "He is unable to comment further on matters relating to national security."

Prince Andrew, the young-

er brother of King Charles III, has been repeatedly criticized for his links to wealthy foreigners, raising concerns that those individuals are trying to buy access to the royal family.

Andrew's finances have been squeezed in recent years after he was forced to step away from royal duties and give up pub-

lic funding amid concerns about his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein, the American financier and convicted pedophile who committed suicide in prison in 2019. British intelligence chiefs have become increasingly concerned about China's efforts to influence U.K. government policy. In 2022, Britain's domestic intelligence service, known as MI5, warned politicians that a British-Chinese lawyer had been seeking to improperly influence members of Parliament for years. A parliamentary researcher was arrested in 2023 on suspicion of providing sensitive information to China.

The 50-year-old Chinese national covered by this week's ruling was described as a man who worked as a junior civil servant in China before he came to the U.K. as a student in 2002.

He earned a master's degree in public administration and public policy at the University of York before starting a business that advises U.K.-based companies on their operations in China. □

Europe's anti-torture watchdog slams Italy over migrant detention abuses

By **GIADA ZAMPANO**

ROME (AP) — The Council of Europe's anti-torture committee on Friday released a report criticizing Italy's treatment of migrants in local detention centers, citing cases of physical ill-treatment, excessive force

and the use of psychotropic drugs on detainees.

The report by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) follows an April visit to four migrant detention and repatriation centers in Milan, Gradisca, Potenza and Rome. Under

Italian law, these centers are aimed at hosting migrants who try to enter the country without a visa, are not entitled to apply for asylum and are deemed "socially dangerous" by law enforcement. The report details instances of "interventions" in the detention facilities, known as CPRs, and identifies shortcomings including "the absence of any rigorous and independent monitoring of such interventions and the lack of an accurate recording of injuries" sustained by detainees. Italy has in the past defended the role of these centers as a deterrent to surging illegal migration, noting that some "prison elements" are necessary to prevent escapes from these facilities. The far-right government led by Gior-

gia Meloni has also tried to export the Italian model abroad, sealing a contentious agreement with Albania to build and run two migrant holding centers in the eastern country. The deal, however, has faced legal hurdles and has been suspended by Italian magistrates in its early stages.

In its report Friday, the CPT was also critical of the "widespread practice" of administering unprescribed psychotropic drugs to detainees in Potenza, one of the four centers visited.

The report also highlights "the prolonged handcuffing of persons apprehended on the territory during their transfer to a (holding facility)."

In its report, the anti-torture watchdog recommended Italy to remove the "car-

ceral elements" from the centers and to ensure their proper maintenance, notably the sanitary facilities. It also showed the critical lack of activities offered to migrants held in the centers, with minimal efforts to offer them "a few activities of a recreational nature."

The report concludes that the committee's findings, "notably in relation to the very poor material conditions, the absence of a regime of activities, the disproportionate security approach, the variable quality of health care provision and the lack of transparency of the management of CPRs by private contractors," call into question the application of such a model by Italy in an extra-territorial setting, such as in Albania. □



Migrants intercepted in international waters board an Italian coast guard vessel at the port of Shengjin, Albania, with destination Italy, after a court in Rome rejected their detention, Saturday, Oct. 19, 2024.

Associated Press

Ukraine's reformed military procurement agency drives the country's NATO ambitions

By **SAMYA KULLAB**

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) —

Ukraine's Defense Ministry unveiled a new state agency for its armed forces last year. It was the government's answer to the rampant corruption within the ministry's procurement companies, and meant to be a driver of reform on the elusive path toward NATO membership.

The enterprise, in charge of purchasing nonlethal military goods such as food, clothes and fuel, has already contracted 95% of the products requested for supply, and saved 25% in the process, says Arsen Zhumadilov, the CEO of the State Logistics Operator, known by the local abbreviation DOT. Soon, he says, DOT also will begin procuring drones.

These kinds of results are an example of the type of reform that Ukraine hopes will help clear the path toward NATO, a key deterrent against Russia, officials have argued. Membership in the alliance remains largely a political question, with key states reluctant to grant it, fearing escalation from Moscow.

Western officials are also keenly awaiting the inauguration of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump before making declarations. But NATO officials have also demanded widespread



Ukrainian soldiers of 3rd assault brigade fly by an FPV exploding drone over Russian positions in Kharkiv region, Ukraine, on Aug. 24, 2024.

Associated Press

anti-graft reforms before Kyiv can join.

Change has been a difficult pill for many within Ukraine's post-Soviet institutions to swallow.

DOT's promising results so far stand in contrast to the deeply-rooted challenges that continue to plague the tenure of Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, including slow progress with restructuring the institution and ongoing allegations of corruption within lethal military procurement.

Recently, Umerov has come under scrutiny in the Ukrainian press for appoint-

ing ministry officials with whom he also has close business ties, including Zhumadilov.

Western officials are closely monitoring DOT, three Western diplomats told The Associated Press. So far, they have been pleased with the results one year since it was formed. They spoke on condition of anonymity in order to speak freely about their assessments.

DOT embodies the uneasy coexistence of a digital-savvy youthful ethos and paper-heavy post-Soviet bureaucracy. Its office exudes a fresh startup culture

vibe, while catering to one of the most stubbornly rigid ministries in the country. The contrast underscores the spirit of how Russia's war in Ukraine is being fought, in which innovative drone wars coincide with World War II-style trenches.

"We understand that we have been on the radars of NATO, of G7 (Group of Seven) countries, of all NATO member countries in terms of whether we manage or not to put in place a procurement system that is resilient, that is effective, efficient, and that is not prone to corruption," Zhumadilov

said.

Nonlethal military purchases became the focus of two corruption scandals under the leadership of Oleksii Reznikov, the previous defense minister. The first involved inflated prices for food supplies and the other was connected to low-quality winter jackets.

Umerov, Reznikov's successor, has described DOT as not just a new agency, but as the beginning of a new public procurement architecture in Ukraine's defense sector. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy specifically tasked Umerov to increase transparency in defense procurement where corruption has always been rife.

Zhumadilov, an influential public figure with Crimean Tatar origins known for spearheading reforms in public procurement, was selected because of his previous track record of success. He previously headed Ukraine's procurement of medical supplies. He was appointed to the role in Reznikov's time.

Plastered on the wall of the agency is a mood board devised by the company's marketing department.

A photo of a military vehicle is placed next to a snaking jungle dirt road, a drone in flight next to a fluffy puppy in midair, a Rubik's Cube and a designer candle. □



This photo released by Colombia's National Police press office shows who they identify as British citizen Christopher Neil, known by the alias "Dips," center, as he is shown to the press in Medellin, Colombia, Friday, Dec. 13, 2024.

Associated Press

Colombia arrests alleged 'invisible' cocaine trafficker wanted in the UK

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Colombia arrested a suspected British drug trafficker they described as "invisible" due to his low-key lifestyle that allowed him to remain anonymous while operating as a cartel's coordinator of cocaine trafficking from the South American country to the United Kingdom, authorities said Friday. Christopher Neil was arrested Thursday in the northwestern city of Medellin in an operation by local law enforcement and Interpol.

They accused Neil of working for Colombia's Clan del Golfo cartel.

Colombian authorities have coined the term "invisible drug traffickers" to describe those who operate discreetly, maintaining

ordinary, low-profile lives that contrast with the eccentricity of the country's drug lords in the 1980s and 1990s.

Colombia's National Police said Neil had lived in Colombia since December 2018. The agency said he is wanted in the United Kingdom, where he faces trafficking and money laundering accusations.

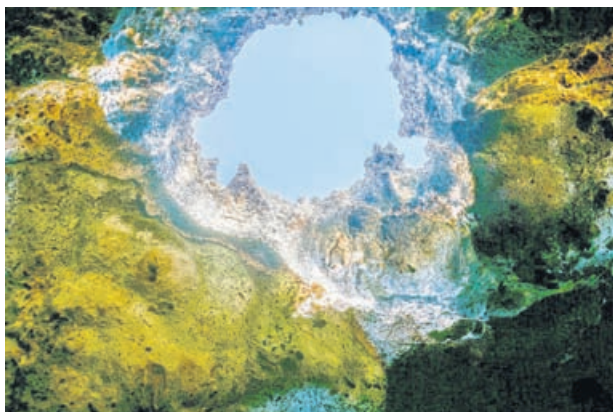
Police said they followed a car that moved through Medellin before arresting Neil. They said a multi-million-dollar transaction between the United Kingdom and Colombia played a key role in catching the suspect.

It was not immediately clear Friday if Neil had an attorney who could comment on his behalf. □

Today is going to be a good day

(Oranjestad)—Here's why: Aruba Today collected some things to do BEYOND the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.

Nature Calls



The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whiptail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website www.arubanationalpark.org

Philip's Animal Garden



To stay with the animals, let's hop to an amazing place. Something different to do, an experience that is to be enjoyed by people of all ages. Welcome to Philip's Animal Garden. We are not talking about a zoo here, this is actually a sanctuary for all types of creatures, from

horses to peacocks, kangaroos to turtles, monkeys, goats, and many, many more different species. The place was founded in 2009 and it is the only organization rescuing and rehabilitating exotic animals in Aruba, which has resulted in an amazing collection of these animals. They provide a suitable living environment for all the rescued animals. Up until now the owner, Philip, has built this shelter with his own efforts; building all the cages from scratch, designing all structures and welding them with his own bare hands. His goal is to upgrade the facilities to a world-class animal shelter with veterinary care and round-the-clock staffs. With the input from the Aruban community and visitors they provide the best care for these animals. Please check out their website for more information: www.philipsanimalgarden.com.

The Lighthouse



No, you would not think of this as a hidden gem. The California Lighthouse is actually one of the most known highlights in Aruba and many repeated guests most probably took the ride uphill already. But, there is a significant change to this tower. Since September 2016 you can climb the top. In 2015 Stichting Monumentenfonds started the restoration of the California Lighthouse. The project finished in September 2016 and the Lighthouse is now open for visitors to enjoy the beautiful view from the top. The construction of the California Lighthouse started in 1915. The name 'California' came from a vessel of the West India Company and Pacific Steamship Co. called 'California' that shipwrecked in the area in 1891. Therefore they came up with the idea of building a lighthouse that could indicate the island's eastern tip to ships with its light. www.arubalighthouse.com will give you more information.

Kayak in the Mangroves



Mangel Halto at Savaneta is definitely a place not to miss out on. The beautiful beach with the natural mangroves is simply a beauty, but if you

are into a more active way to enjoy the nature: take a kayak. While you are doing some work-out -as it might get a little windy and rough-, you will see the island from a different perspective. You can even make a stop to do some snorkeling at the reef. Its fun, it's healthy and for sure something else. There are several companies that offer kayak tours, we had good experience with The Shack Kayak Tours Aruba, find them on Facebook.

Take an "off-road" sightseeing tour



A must-do activity on the island is for sure taking an off-road sightseeing tour. If you have a rented car, you can drive through the north-eastern side of Aruba and explore the natural pools, caves, rock formations and gorgeous view of the Atlantic Ocean. To access most of these sights, like the natural pool (Conchi) and the Guadirikiri and Fontein caves, you must enter through the Arikok National Park and buy a day pass. Then you drive up the rugged road that leads you through the white dunes, caves and along the wind turbines. Other locations, like the Ayo and Casibari Rock formation are situated more in the center of the island, and are free for guests, 24 hours a day.

Go for a shopping spree in the city center



Need a new bathing suit? Head to the city center of Oranjestad, where there is countless of different stores—both high end and more affordable—that can offer you the service you deserve! Local shopping stores often offer a more affordable price, and have a variety of clothes, shoes, bathing suites, purses and more. Along the Royal Plaza strip, there are numerous jewelry stores with great quality jewelry. In the Renaissance mall, you can shop high-end luxury brands, like Dolce & Gabbana, Kate Spade, Louis Vuitton and more.

Around the high-rise hotel area near Palm Beach, the Paseo Herencia Mall contain a variety of shopping stores, restaurants, small food stands and even a movie theater! □

Celebrating Forty Years - 1,600,000 Point Giveaway Every Friday, Saturday & Sunday



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Fusion - Piano & Wine Bar | Shalom Body & Soul Spa | Treasure Cove
Magnet Perfume Jewelry & Cosmetics | The Lazy Lizard | The Market
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Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Aruba, Leads as World's First Hotel to Earn Two Perfect 100% Scores from Green Globe

EAGLE BEACH—Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort made history as the first hotel in the world to achieve two perfect 100% scores from Green Globe, the leading certification for sustainability in travel and tourism. This landmark achievement solidifies the resort's position as a global leader in eco-conscious hospitality. Green Globe's certification program, renowned for its rigorous standards, evaluates over 380 indicators related to environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Bucuti & Tara's perfect scores reflect its unwavering commitment to sustainable tourism, making it the first hotel in Green Globe's history to earn this distinction twice.

Green Globe CEO Birte Pelayo praised Bucuti & Tara's "unprecedented performance," noting the resort's remarkable leadership in carbon-neutral travel. "Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort continues to set a global standard for sustainability, demonstrating how a tourism business can lead with direct action on climate challenges while engaging guests and the local community," Pelayo said. This second perfect score builds on Bucuti & Tara's historic achievement in 2020, when it became the first hotel ever to earn a perfect Green Globe score. The resort's most recent Green Globe audit highlighted various sustainability initiatives that contributed to its flawless performance. These include:

- **Bucuti & Tara – GMC Nature Preserve:** In 2022, the resort, along with Owner/CEO Ewald Biemans and island friend Greta Marie Case, gifted Aruba with a 32-acre/13-hectare prime stretch of land in the middle of busy Noord, called The Bucuti Tara - GMC Nature Preserve. This preserve is being

reforested in partnership with Ban Lanta y Planta and nature trails are being added. Fragile ecosystems are already awakening and when the reforestation is complete with 15,000 indigenous trees, more than 375 tCO2 emissions will be drawn down from the atmosphere each year for Aruba's future generations. Local university students collaborate with the resort to identify native plant species and measure carbon sequestration rates. These efforts continue to draw together staff, guests and community members and businesses who reflect great pride for their Aruba home.

- **Stimami Sterilisami.** In 2016, the resort founded and is the primary funder of Stimami Sterilisami, a national spay/neuter program for local dogs and cats that humanely reduces pet overpopulation on island by providing subsidized spaying and neutering procedures and promotes responsible pet ownership. To date, almost 40,000 pets have been spayed or neutered and the program is expanding to provide fully complimentary spay and neuter procedures to rescue organizations and low income households.

- **Monthly Beach Clean-ups:** A 32-year tradition at Bucuti & Tara, monthly beach clean-ups regularly remove more than 1,000 lbs/454 kg of debris annually, engaging staff



and guests. Locals and island organizations are also invited to join the efforts.

- **Local Artistry in Renovations:** The recent reimagining of Bucuti & Tara's casually sophisticated Tara Lounge includes furniture handcrafted by local artisans, blending sustainability with cultural celebration.

Owner/CEO Ewald Biemans expressed his pride in the resort's achievement, saying, "Receiving a second perfect score from Green Globe fuels our ongoing mission

to protect Aruba's natural beauty and share it with our guests, staff, and community."

Bucuti & Tara's dedication to sustainability and wellness ensures that each stay leaves a positive impact on Aruba's environment and future. For more information, visit Bucuti.com.

About Green Globe

Green Globe is the leading certification for sustainable tourism. Founded in 1993, the certification recognizes organizations that meet rigorous standards in environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Its comprehensive criteria, developed over three decades, assess a wide range of operations, from energy and water conservation to community engagement and biodiversity preservation. Green Globe helps businesses integrate sustainable practices into their operations while providing guests with trusted, eco-conscious choices. □



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f

A quick snack for the road: Learn how to make the Aruban Pastechi!

(Oranjestad)—If you ever been to Aruba before, you probably heard of (and even tried) the Aruban Pastechi. Beloved by young and old, this tasty treat is a staple for party snacks, a quick lunch or even breakfast!

Here's how to make the Pastechi dough.

- Ingredients:
- 4 cups of wheat flour
 - 1 tbsp baking powder (if using self-rising flour, omit baking powder)
 - 1 tsp salt
 - 1 tbsp sugar
 - 0.5 cup of melted butter
 - 1 cup water
 - 1 egg

Directions:
Sift your flour into a bowl

and add all the dry ingredients before giving it a quick mix. Next add the butter, water and egg and mix until thoroughly combined. At this point, your dough will start to get sticky; time for an arm workout. Knead your dough into the bowl you are using or on a clean surface with some flour lightly dusted until its surface is smooth. You'll know your dough is ready when it doesn't stick to your hands or the surface on which you're kneading it. Let your dough rest covered for 15-20 minutes.

After resting, divide your dough into approximately 100 gram balls and roll it flat with a rolling pin. The thickness of the pastechi depends on your taste, but

the average thinness would be around 1/4 inch or so.

Filling for the pastechis varies according to your taste. The easiest and most common filling you'll find in Aruba is a simple cheese filling. For this, we usually use shredded Gouda, but feel free to use any cheese that melts well when frying the pastry.

Place the filling on your rolled out piece of dough, fold it in half and pinch the sides shut with a fork. If you have a folding tool, feel free to use it for this process. Your pastechi is ready for the fryer!

If you want to store some pastechis for later use, you can freeze them. A good



tip is to place a piece of wax paper in between each pastechi if you are to store them on top of one another. This way the pastechis don't stick to each other when defrosting.

Here in Aruba we enjoy pastechi at any time of

the day, but it has become almost tradition to eat pastechis for breakfast on the way to work. Many roadside snack trucks sell pastechi from early morning to noon, and offer a variety of fillings like cheese; ham and cheese; ground beef and pulled chicken to name a few. □

Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our Candelchi!

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can't recognize. One of these may be the "Candelchi" (Squirrelfish), a common, yet shy fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba.

Let's talk about the names of fish. Do you know your fish? The Department of Department of



Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries, known as Santa Rosa, offers this informative article that illustrate some fish and their names in Papiamentu.

Candelchi, Squirrelfish, Holocentrus adscensionis:

Candelchi actually refers to the entire squirrelfish family or, as some say, when we say candelchi, we mean several different species but without distinguishing them by species. In this picture, we are showing the most common one in our waters, which is called squirrelfish in English or scientifically known as Holocentrus adscensionis.

Under candelchi, we in Aruba generally refer to all the different species of squirrelfish. They all look alike and it's really difficult to distinguish between them.

The squirrelfish family is distinguished by the following characteristics. They are heart-shaped

with pink or red hues and often show heart-shaped streaks between the scales along the body. They have hard fins and are always armed. Over at our sister island Curaçao, they are called "bari di clabo" (nail barrel) for that reason.

In our waters, there are 7 to 8 types or species present and they are sometimes caught and seen occasionally. They can be distinguished by different marks such as color on the dorsal spine or marks on the body.

In Aruba:

Candelchi are found on reefs or areas with structure in the water where they can hide. Although they prefer to hunt for food at night, they are also active during the day. They are edible and delicious when prepared dry and crispy with lime. It is particularly challenging to scale the fish, which is why it is not one of the favorites among fishermen. They often live in groups. □

Aruba's cultural and literary development: Then and now

(Oranjestad)—The Aruban culture has seen many substantial developments over the course of a century. With the introduction of the Lago Refinery at the turn of the 20th century, followed by the breakout of the Second World War and the general incentive for political independence during the mid-century, a cultural identity on the island began to take form and have since developed through international and local influences.

In the pre-industrial era of the 19th century, much could not be said about a cultural identity on the island. Still being a part of a Dutch colonial territory at the time, as well as not having political or economic autonomy (Curacao was the center of commerce, cultural life, and political management of the Netherland Antilles at the time), the small population of Aruba consisted mostly of farmers and fishermen, tending to their crops and their cattle, or going out to fish to provide for their family. As Quito Nicolaas states in his article *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* (Literary History of Aruba: Cultural Life), "during the pre-industrial period, there were no significant economic activity that could have created a cultural ambience, with only one way to generate profit at the time for the sub existence of Aruban families."

It wasn't until the introduction of the Lago Refinery in San Nicolas in 1928, that the island saw a small boom in cultural manifestations and entertainment,



as farmers left the 'cunucu' (country) life to work in the refinery, which resulted in Aruba acquiring a different economic pillar. Before this, entertainment and cultural manifestations were mostly experienced by local parishes and the island's elite, who often partook in cultural and entertaining activities around the island, like going to the movie theater or coming together to share poetry on Sundays after church.

Literary life

Throughout the 19th century and up until the 1940s,

there were also not much trace of a cultural climate for the cultural-literary sector on the island. Primary education was introduced on the island in the mid-19th century, followed by secondary and higher education around the late 30's and 40's. It wasn't until the 1950s, with the introduction of the E.R.N.A agreement in 1951 and the signing of the Statute in 1954, which allowed more space for and control over the economic and cultural development of Aruba, that the literary life on the island began to grow substantially com-

pared to decades before. This was in response to local institutions established in the 1940s for cultural and literary growth on the island, but that did not yet capture the attention of the general public. The 1950 brought with it a boom of literary production on the island, like those of V.S. Piternella, as well as migrant authors José Ramón Vicioso y Rings William Rufus, who have also contributed to the literary development on the island. The literary movement was further promoted by local broadcasters Voz di Aruba and Radio Kelboom, with their regular broadcast of literary works. The 50s and 60s also saw the influence of international cultures, especially that of the United States. During this time, because of international influences as well as the continued prosperity of the oil refinery, cultural traditions in Aruba began to really take form and become widespread, as different worldly and local concepts were introduced in the Aruban soci-

ety. With the establishment of local television broadcast station Tele-Aruba in 1963, and with time and possibilities, local programs such as "Nos Tera" ("Our Land") started to pay more attention to the Aruban culture and worked to form a cultural consciousness within the community. The 1960s also saw the rise of local authors and artists, who were more comfortable in producing works in our native tongue, Papiamentu, but who also produced works in Spanish, English and Dutch. This new phenomenon was in response to the interaction between economic growth, individual prosperity, cultural life and literary expression.

The 21st century

Nowadays, international influence on our culture is still prevalent, especially those from Latin America, the United States and The Netherlands. Nevertheless, there also exists a strong cultural identity and traditions that are exclusive to the Aruban culture, often manifesting during traditional celebrations, like Dia di San Juan/ Dera Gai (St. John's Day), Dia di Himno y Bandera (National Hymn and Flag Day), Camping during Easter and much more. With the surge of social media in the last decade, artistic voices, especially those of the younger generation, has become even more prevalent and easily accessible to the community of Aruba through online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. Source: *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* by J.R. "Quito" Nicolaas.



Did you know about...

Basic driving rules on Aruba (part 2)

(Oranjestad)—In Yesterday's issue, we've provided some basic rules when driving on the four-lane highways and roundabouts on the island. Today, we want to offer you more tips and tricks when it comes to driving on the roads and highways of Aruba.

Speed limit in certain areas

As mentioned in yesterday's issue, the legal minimum and maximum speed limit on the island is 50 and 80 km/h respectively. However, there are some areas where it is mandated to drive up to a certain speed. This is always indicated by a circular traffic sign with red border and the number 50 on it. Signs like these are always paired

by a similar sign with the number crossed out further down the road. This means that the mandate for this speed is now over; you may increase your velocity. Red borders on traffic sign—whether it's a circle or triangle—usually signal a warning, prohibition or preference.

Besides the "50" sign, you may also

encounter a traffic sign that says "bebouwde kom". These can be found in San Nicolas and Oranjestad. Bebouwde kom signs are rectangular and blue, and essentially tell you that you are in a heavily inhabited area. The maximum speed limit in a bebouwde kom is 50 km/h. Just like the previous pair, bebouwde kom signs are also paired with a similar sign crossed out.

Priority signs

On the main roads of Aruba (not the highways), you may see a yellow, squared sign with a white border. This sign tells you that on this road, you have priority and all other traffic should yield to you. This sign can be seen in Savaneta for example. So, if you are driving on the main road in Savaneta going to San Nicolas, you are driving on a single long road, and other cars that want to get on this main road or cross it, either from an intersection or from a dirt road, must all wait until traffic on the main road is clear. In other words, you do not have to stop for them. This sign too has a counter part that indicates that your priority is over.

Another priority sign you may encounter is a triangle sign with a red border and something that looks like a cross. You'll see this sign in an intersection. The general rule of thumb for crossing an intersection that do not contain traffic lights, roundabouts, sign or arrows on the road, is to always yield for traffic on your right. However, if you encounter this sign on your side of the intersection, you have priority over the other cars, even the one on your right.

However, be careful not to confuse this sign with a similar up-side down triangle, also found on intersections. This sign is a prohibition sign, telling you that you have to stop and give other cars priority. Of course you also have a "stop" sign that mean the same thing. The stop sign is generally used for tricky intersections with minimal view of opposite incoming traffic.

These are some of the basic rules that you would have to know if you decide to drive on the island. These are of course other traffic signs, and we recommend you visit aruba-travelguide.com for an extensive overview of all traffic signs used on Aruba. □

Picture credits: aruba-travelguide.com



bebouwde kom



end bebouwde kom



end priority



end speed limit



intersection priority



priority



speed limit



stop sign



triangle stop sign

CROSSWORD

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

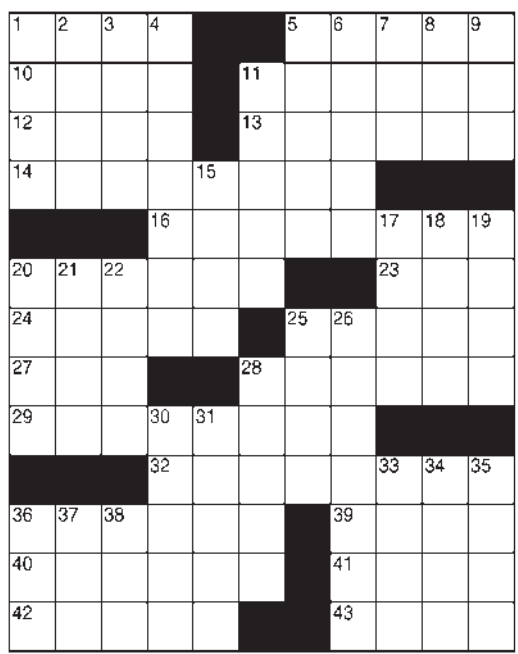
ACROSS

- 1 Brothers' home
5 Gave a hint
10 Wood strip
11 Som-nolent state
12 Love, Latin-style
13 Mandrill relative
14 Forest floor sight
16 Restaurant card
20 Fairy
23 Female rabbit
24 Fragrant flower
25 Quartet member
27 Film's Lupino
28 Flour merchant
29 Billiards variant
32 Oscilloscope sight
36 Small
39 Magnetic metal
40 Sights
41 Raunchy
42 Rotates
43 Highlands girl

DOWN

- 1 Commotion

- 2 Malek of "Bohemian Rhapsody"
3 Heaps
4 Added for free
5 Construction site sight
6 Clothing brand
7 First número
8 Green prefix
9 Bear lair
11 Steak choice
15 Mayor's domain
17 Fans' favorite
18 Foot feature
19 Rip
20 Go around
21 Toenail treatment, for short
22 Speckled horse
25 Foul
26 Malice
28 Lion features
30 Endorse online
31 Quick snacks
33 Open space
34 Wedding words
35 Halts
36 Trading spot
37 Outback bird
38 Mariner



AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-14

CRYPTOQUOTE

OYPAXSUZX AX UBXS SPTRG
OYPAXSUZX JYVF JV
OVRVNPZSV AS NG CDAFC
SYV RACYS BQ RBDV SB
SYBXV JYB FVVL AS UBXS.

— PTSY OZPSVP XSZERVSBF
Cryptoquote: SOME PEOPLE ARE
WORTH MELTING FOR. — OLAF, "FROZEN"

Cruise ship Schedule: December 09 - 15 2024

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	09	CELEBRITY ECLIPSE	08.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	10	CELEBRITY REFLECTION	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00	22.00	C	1
		EMERALD PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	I	1
WED	11	ZUIDERDAM	07.00	16.00	B	1
		AIDABELLA	10.00	****	C	1
		SILVER MOON	08.00	23.00	I	1
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
THU	12	MARELLA DISCOVERY	08.00	20.00	I	1
		AIDABELLA - Dept.	****	18.00	C	-
FRI	13	EVIRIMA	07.00	19.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL VENEZIA	09.00	22.00	C	1
SUN	15	OCEANIA NAUTICA	11.00	21.00	C	1
		EURODAM	08.00	17.00	B	1
		FREEWINDS - DEPT.	****	22.15	E	-

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

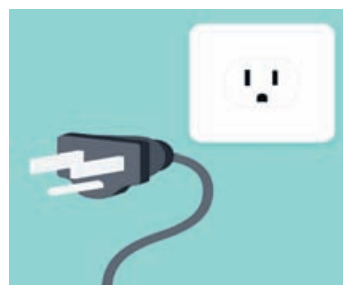
Supermarket hours



(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Electrical power



Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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24/7

Huge and rare Mekong catfish spotted in Cambodia, raising conservation hopes



In this photo released by Zeb Hogan, USAID Wonders of the Mekong Project, people hold a Mekong giant catfish to release it in Mekong River in Kampong Cham, Cambodia on Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2024.

Associated Press

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL
Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Six critically endangered Mekong giant catfish one of the largest and rarest freshwater fish in the world were caught and released recently in Cambodia, re-viving hopes for the survival of the species. The underwater giants can grow up to 10 feet (3 meters) long and weigh up to 300 kilograms (661 pounds), or as heavy as a grand piano. They now are only found in Southeast Asia's Mekong River but in the past inhabited the length of the 4,900-kilometer (3,044 mile)-long river, all the way from its outlet in Vietnam to its northern reaches in China's Yunnan province. The species' population

has plummeted by 80% in recent decades due to rising pressures from over-fishing, dams that block the migratory path the fish follow to spawn and other disruptions. Few of the millions of people who depend on the Mekong for their livelihoods have ever seen a giant catfish. To find six of the giants, which were caught and released within 5 days, is unprecedented. The first two were on the Tonle Sap river, a tributary of the Mekong not far from Cambodian capital Phnom Penh. They were given identification tags and released. On Tuesday, fishermen caught four more giant catfish including two longer than 2 meters (6.5 feet) that weighed 120 kilograms and 131 ki-

lograms (264 pounds and 288 pounds), respectively. The captured fish were apparently migrating from their floodplain habitats near Cambodia's Tonle Sap Lake northward along the Mekong River, likely to spawning grounds in northern Cambodia, Laos or Thailand.

"It's a hopeful sign that the species is not in imminent, like in the next few years, risk of extinction, which gives conservation activities time to be implemented and to continue to bend the curve away from decline and toward recovery," said Dr. Zeb Hogan, a University of Nevada Reno research biologist who leads the U.S. Agency for International Development-funded Wonders of the Mekong project. Much is still unknown about the giant fish, but over the past two decades a joint conservation program by the Wonders of the Me-

kong and the Cambodian Fisheries Administration has caught, tagged and released around 100 of them, gaining insights into how the catfish migrate, where they live and the health of the species.

"This information is used to establish migration corridors and protect habitats to try to help these fish survive in the future," said Hogan. □



HEALTH

DOCTOR ON DUTY

Oranjestad

Hospital 7:00 pm / 10:00pm
Tel. 527 4000

San Nicolas

Imsan 24 hours
Tel. 524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY

Oranjestad:

Eagle: Tel. 587 9011

San Nicolas:

Seroe Preto: Tel. 584 4606

OTHER

Dental Clinic 587 9850
Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic
+297 588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	587 5900
Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

TRAVEL INFO

Aruba Airport	524 2424
American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

AID FOUNDATIONS

Aruba Food Bank
Tel. 588 0002
FAVI- Visually Impaired
Tel. 582 5051
Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989
Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888
Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433
Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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Caya G.F.



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How to write a holiday rom-com for TV, according to the experts

By ALICIA RANCILIO
Associated Press

Have you ever watched a holiday rom-com on Hallmark Channel or Lifetime or any of the other many networks and streamers that now air them and thought, "I could write that"? It's harder than you may think but just as fun. Regular writers of Christmas fare for Hallmark Channel, Great American Family and Lifetime share the ins and outs, misconceptions and exceptions to writing a Christmas TV movie.

Christmas is 365 days a year

Some say the holiday season goes by quickly, but for those whose jobs depend on it, Christmas is always on the brain. Writers are always looking for their next gig so there's no real rest or downtime between assignments. The pressure is on to come up with ideas, get them sold and get writing so the films can get made and ready to air.

"I feel like when I'm not writing Christmas movies I'm pitching Christmas movies, so I feel like it's Christmas all year round," said Anna White, who executive produced and wrote "The Holiday Junkie," directed by and starring Jennifer Love Hewitt, premiering Saturday on Lifetime.

It can be challenging, however, to get into the mindset of Christmas when life outside doesn't match the world you're creating. Rick Garman, who wrote the 2023 Hallmark Channel hit film "Christmas on Cherry Lane," along with its three sequels this year for Hallmark+, often writes Christmas movies in June.

A resident of Savannah, Georgia, he says the high heat and humidity can be a slog. When those moments bubble up, Garman has trained himself to think big picture. "I sort of flip back to this idea that people are going to watch this movie and it's going to make them happy ... and then I sort of get over myself."

Cookie cutter stories

Sometimes writing a script



This image released by Great American Family shows Jill Wagner, left, and Jesse Hutch in a scene from "Christmas Under the Northern Lights." Associated Press

for a Christmas TV movie can be like listening to the same holiday song on repeat.

"If you look at the hundreds and hundreds of Christmas movies over the last several years, it is tricky to come up with a different idea or a new twist on an old idea or a classic," said Cara Russell, whose film "Christmas Under the Northern Lights" debuted on Great American Family in November.

Selling an idea or a script can cause déjà vu says Nina Weinman, whose 2024 offering was "Debbie Macomber's Joyful Mrs. Miracle," for Hallmark.

"I pitched a Christmas idea and they were like, 'It's so good that we have something identical to that already in development.'" You're like, 'OK, somebody else got their first.' That happens."

This is where writers have to push themselves to find different ways to tell stories, said White. She asks herself, "What is a new hook into this? What is something we've never seen? What is a world we've never seen? What is a topic we've never explored? That's kind of hard because obviously now every channel everywhere does a million Christmas movies, but that's the challenge."

Garman admits trying to think of fresh ideas to keep

himself interested as well. "There's only so many times that they can bake cookies," he said.

No recipe required

Many wonder if there's a formula to writing a Christmas movie with certain criteria that must be met like "mistletoe kiss, check." Weinman says absolutely not.

"That is not true. I don't know where the rumor started that there's a list out there. There's not."

Telling different stories

Weinman credits Hallmark Channel for branching out in recent years with their Christmas content.

"There wasn't a lot of creative freedom when I first started writing these movies. Now they've found you have to go bigger or go bolder if you want the people to keep coming back. And they are. I see a lot of feedback that the audience loves the big swings." She's especially proud of a movie she wrote that debuted last year on Hallmark called "Catch Me If You Claus" that was more of a caper. "I wrote that movie 10 years ago. It was too broad for a while. They finally said yes."

In recent years, Hallmark Channel and Lifetime added Christmas movies with LGBTQ storylines and Hanukkah-themed films too. This year, Julie Sherman

Wolfe, who is Jewish, wrote both "Holiday Touchdown: A Chiefs Love Story" and "Hanukkah on the Rocks" for Hallmark Channel. Her first Hanukkah-themed movie was "Hanukkah on Rye" from 2022.

"I got to release everything anyone in my family has ever said or done that's funny or touching or just culturally significant to Hanukkah. I just threw it all into that, but then somehow found some more stuff for "Hanukkah on the Rocks." White grew up Jewish and said "one of the great things about these Christmas movies is they're pretty like, you know, non-religious. They're pretty much just like, what's the pop culture of Christmas? I love that."

Keep the Christmas vibes

With no checklist to follow, it's helpful to remember those who tune in are fans of the genre. In other words, if you want to sell a Christmas movie to a network, keep it Christmas-y. "There's not going to be sex, drugs and rock and roll. That's never going to happen. It's always staying on brand," said Weinman. "It's comfort food. The couple is going to end up together. Nobody's going to die," added Garman.

Garman has taught classes on writing Christmas movies and tells students to remember that Christmas

drives the story. "How does the Christmas spirit help people achieve their goal or how does it bring these two people together or how do they find their way back to something because of Christmas?"

And, in the world of TV movies about Christmas, bad guys aren't "an outright villain or a caricature," said Russell. Instead, Garman describes them as "misguided" people who "usually learn their lesson by the end. Knowing that everything's going to be OK at the end of this two hours is why people watch."

The Christmas countdown starts early

Some people put their Christmas tree up as soon as they're done handing out Halloween candy. Networks are aware of this and ready to meet the demand. Hallmark Channel kicked off its annual Countdown to Christmas with original films and repeats beginning Oct. 18. Lifetime waited until pumpkin spice lattes had cooled and started their schedule on Nov. 16.

Bill Abbott is the president and CEO of Great American Media and prior to that was the head of Hallmark's parent company. Between both jobs, he's watched the demand for Christmas movies begin earlier and earlier.

"Initially I would have thought that Christmas movies would be very popular between maybe the week before Thanksgiving through Christmas," said Abbott. "As it's turned out, it's popular from October through the end of the year."

It should be no surprise that Great American Family started their holiday season off earlier than any other network. The first Christmas movie to air this year on Great American Family was on Oct. 10, which Abbott says is "beyond my wildest expectations." So you think you can write a Christmas movie? Then do it.

White majored in screenwriting at Loyola Marymount University. □

Only LeBron James knows what's happening right now, and what's in his future

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — LeBron James was starring in Las Vegas at this time last year, the headline attraction while he and the Los Angeles Lakers were about to win the inaugural version of the event now known as the NBA Cup.

It seems very different now. "Personal reasons ... he's taking some time" is what Lakers coach JJ Redick said this week when detailing why James was missing from practice. "Left foot soreness" is the reason why the Lakers have ruled him out of Friday's game in Minnesota.

There's been trade speculation in recent days, and it's reasonable to think that a team like Golden State would clamor for James if he was available. And he's turning 40 in about two weeks.

Whenever James is out, it's a story. Taking time off for personal reasons, it's a story. It could mean he's hurt. It could mean he's fed up with how the Lakers have struggled in recent weeks. It could mean he just needs



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (23) kneels on the court in the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Atlanta Hawks, Friday, Dec. 6, 2024, in Atlanta.

Associated Press

a break. It could mean anything. All that is certain is he's not playing Friday. "All of this is very fluid," Redick said when asked about James' absence. "All of it is. All of it is. That's what's crystallized." James' no-trade clause is the ultimate card in the deck right now. If James wants to be traded, he'll

probably get traded. If he doesn't, then he'll remain a Laker and continue on a roster that also features his son Bronny. The Lakers play only two games in the next week. It's a nice time for a break if his left foot is a problem and the wear-and-tear of 22 seasons is requiring him to take some time off.

In short, nobody knows anything. Except LeBron, of course.

He's the oldest player in the league, has set just about every record that he's going to set, has more money than he could ever spend. There isn't anything left to prove.

He is under contract for next season, but the finish

line whether it's after this season or not is fast approaching.

"I'm not going to play that much longer, to be completely honest. I don't know how many years that is, if it's one year, two years, whatever the case may be," James said last month. "I'm not playing 'til the wheels fall off. I'm not going to be that guy. I'm not going to be the guy who's disrespecting the game because I just want to be out on the floor. That won't be me."

The numbers show the wheels haven't fallen off. His scoring is down (23 points per game, his lowest average since his rookie season) but his rebound and assist numbers are up from last season.

The only other player this season averaging 23 points, eight rebounds and nine assists per game is Denver's Nikola Jokic, who probably is the MVP frontrunner yet again. The wheels are fine. It should be noted that this time of year is the start of the NBA's silly season. There are 85 players eligible to be traded starting Sunday. □

Lindsey Vonn to enter World Cup ski races next weekend in Switzerland in her comeback at age 40

By **PAT GRAHAM**
AP Sports Writer

BEAVER CREEK, Colo. (AP) — Lindsey Vonn will return to World Cup ski racing next weekend for a pair of super-G events in St. Moritz, Switzerland, as she continues her comeback at 40 years old.

Vonn teased her return in an Instagram post through her sponsor, Red Bull, on Friday morning. She said, "My body is finally put back together. I hear St. Moritz is pretty nice this time of year." The U.S. Ski Team then confirmed she will race in St. Moritz.

She's won five of her 82 World Cup races on the course at St. Moritz. There will be super-G competitions next Saturday and

Sunday.

"It's the coolest thing ever," said Picabo Street, a two-time Olympic medalist and Vonn's former teammate. "I'm not surprised at all. I've seen her intermittently and she's stayed in great shape. She is the hardest working person I've met in my life period."

It will be Vonn's first major race since February 2019, when she took third in the downhill during the world championships in Sweden. An assortment of injuries, including to her knee, sent her into retirement. But a partial knee replacement last April has her feeling good enough again to give racing another chance.

Vonn earned enough points to be eligible to

compete on the World Cup circuit through a series of lower-level competitions last weekend in Copper Mountain, Colorado. She's been testing out the Birds of Prey course at Beaver Creek as a forerunner in training runs this week. She's didn't take the hill Friday, but will again in a forerunning capacity ahead of the downhill on Saturday and the super-G on Sunday.

"She's living her best life," said Street, who's doing commentary work at the Birds of Prey races this weekend for NBC. "She's earned every second of it." When Vonn left the tour, she had 82 World Cup wins the record for a woman at the time and within reach

of the all-time Alpine mark of 86 held by Swedish standout Ingemar Stenmark. The women's record held by Vonn was eclipsed

in January 2023 by Mikaela Shiffrin, whose 99 wins are more than any Alpine ski racer in the history of the sport. □



Forerunner Lindsey Vonn, of the United States, skis down the course before the training runs at the women's World Cup downhill race, Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024, in Beaver Creek, Colo.

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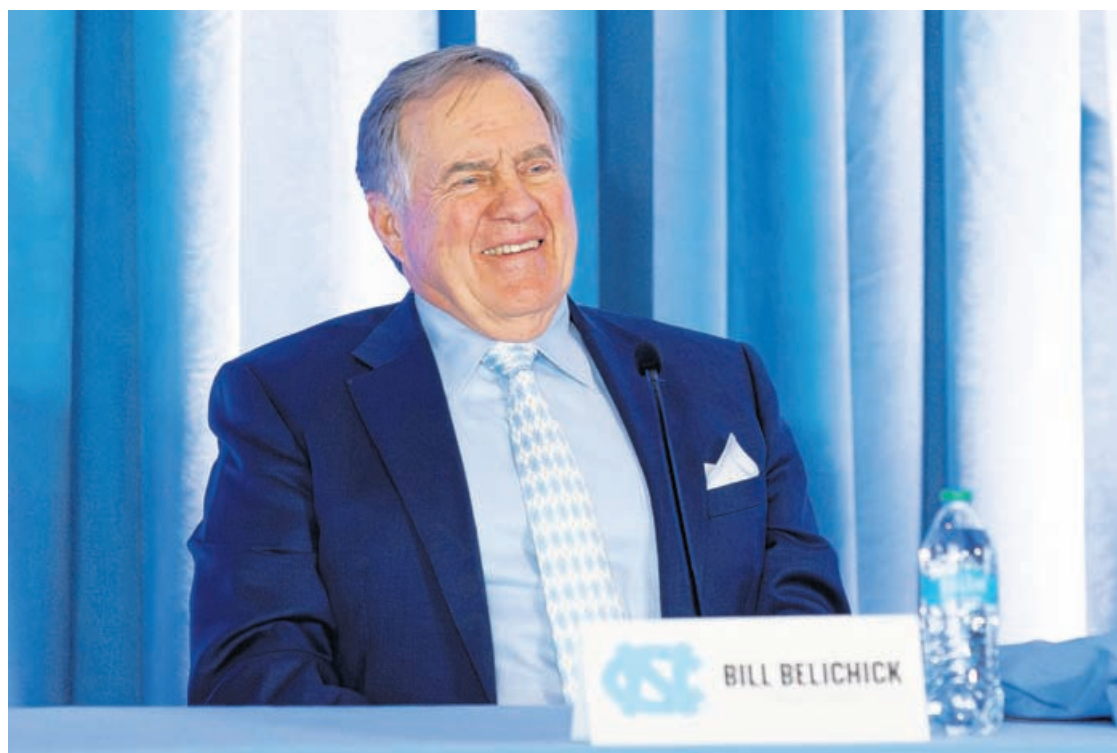
Win or lose at North Carolina, Bill Belichick's NFL legacy is already cemented: Analysis

By **ROB MAADDI**
 AP Pro Football Writer

Bill Belichick didn't wait around for a call that he might not get from an NFL team.

With no guarantees that another opportunity might come his way only the Atlanta Falcons interviewed Belichick last offseason and unsure whether he could find the right fit in the NFL, the 72-year-old future Hall of Fame coach decided to go back to school. Belichick took his eight Super Bowl rings to North Carolina on a mission to build a college program the way he constructed two dynasties during 24 seasons with the New England Patriots. It starts with doing things his way.

The Patriot Way is legendary. Perhaps it'll translate into the Tar Heel way. That's to be determined. But Belichick is back doing what he loves: coaching. And, he's going to run the show with his guys around him. An NFL team giving Belichick full control the way he had in New England seemed unlikely. Success at North Carolina could change that thinking. For now, Belichick's quest to break Don Shula's all-time record for most wins in the NFL is on hold. He's 15 victories short but the buyout clause in his college contract a \$10 million fee if done before June 2025 and \$1 million after that date leaves the window open for a return to the league. If Belichick stays in college or retires without returning to the NFL, his legacy is already cemented. Winning at North Carolina will only enhance his reputation. Losing won't impact his NFL resume. "He's one of



New North Carolina football coach Bill Belichick laughs during an NCAA college football press conference, Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024, in Chapel Hill, N.C..

the all-time great coaches. What he's done for the NFL and the game, we all know where he'll end up in the Hall of Fame with a gold jacket," Dallas Cowboys executive Stephen Jones said Wednesday shortly before Belichick agreed on a five-year deal with North Carolina that pays him \$10 million in base and supplemental salary annually with up to \$3.5 million in bonuses per year. Belichick has his detractors. There's no denying he couldn't win without Tom Brady. He was 29-39 and had no playoff wins without No. 12 in his final four seasons with the Patriots. Critics have labeled him a cheater because of the Spygate and Deflategate scandals. He overlooked Aaron Hernandez's issues. He was tough on players, even alienating Brady in the end and letting him walk away in free agency in 2020 only to see him lead the Tampa

Bay Buccaneers to a Super Bowl in his first season there. But Belichick instilled in players the importance of doing their job and presided over an unprecedented two-decade run of dominance that withstood changing times, free agency, salary-cap restrictions and much more. Brady has always maintained how important Belichick was for his career, giving him credit for helping him become one of the best players in sports. Now, Belichick is onto Chapel Hill in a surprise twist after he spent most of the NFL season reinventing himself as an entertaining and engaging analyst. Belichick is a football genius and his knowledge came across on television. But he also displayed a fun personality, trading quips with the Mannings and cracking jokes with Pat McAfee. "College kind of came to me this year," Belichick said at his introductory

news conference. "I didn't necessarily go and seek it out. I had many coaches, probably a couple dozen coaches, talk to me and say, 'Can we come down and talk to you about these things?' Let's call it the salary cap of pro football relative to college football. The headsets, the green dot, the two-minute warning, the tablets on the sideline. Those were all rules changes this year for college football that were either or the same or similar to what we had in the NFL. These coaches said, 'Hey coach can we talk to you about how you did this? How you did that? How did you use this?'" "As those conversations started and then the personnel conversations started relative to salary cap and how you spend whatever the allotment of money you have. I'd say that started to make me a lot more aware of it because the first thing I would have

to do is learn about it. As you learn different things about different programs you start to put it all together. There is some common threads and there's some variables."

How will he do as a college coach? Nobody knows yet. Three of Belichick's former players were skeptical before he took the job.

"There's a lot of things he can do, and obviously he's tremendous, and even showing his personality. But getting out there on the recruiting trail and dealing with all these college kids, that would be ..." Brady said before trailing off during a conversation on Fox's NFL pregame show last Sunday.

Fellow former Patriots Rob Gronkowski and Julian Edelman also wondered the same.

"Can you imagine NIL, and all that nonsense?" Gronkowski said.

Edelman added: "Can you imagine Bill on a couch recruiting an 18-year-old?" But Belichick doesn't have to recruit kids on visits. These are new times in college sports. The NIL has dramatically changed the landscape. Plus, Belichick's name is enough. Just like Deion Sanders at Colorado. "I think it could be great for this game, honestly, if he can find a way to make college football more like this in terms of what's being asked of the coaches, the recruiting staff, the personnel, the NIL, and all those different things," Tampa Bay Buccaneers offensive coordinator Liam Cohen said. "If he can make it a little bit less demanding on some of the coaches and create a great atmosphere and have success, I think it's great for our game. □